

### Supporting Family Systems: *Building Relationships with Families*

Use these ideas and questions to build on what you have learned and extend your practice.

#### THINK ABOUT IT!

- **Self-Reflection**  
Use these questions to think about your own practice.
- **Reflect with Others**  
Supervisors, directors, coaches, and teachers/providers can be reflective partners.
- **The Power of Practice**  
Invite a colleague to join you; observe or record each other and share ideas.

#### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What mental models do I have about families?
- How do my mental models influence my work with families? In what ways have my mental models prevented me from understanding a family's perspective?
- How do I explore my own mental models to see whether they are accurate or based on biases?
- When do I tend to use the communication skills of advocacy and inquiry? Do I prefer to use one skill more than the other?
- How can I use inquiry in my communication with families to explore their ideas and perspectives? What questions can I ask to learn more about families?

#### TRY IT OUT!

Observe the use of advocacy and inquiry in your conversations with colleagues, family members, and friends. What happens in a conversation when someone uses advocacy? What happens when someone uses inquiry?

Practice using inquiry in your interactions with a family in your program. Plan a time to use this skill (for example, during drop-off or pick-up). Possible opening lines include:

- Can you share with me ...?
- I'd like to know more about ....
- What do you think about ...?

Note how using inquiry influences the conversation.

#### How Did It Go?

What did you learn about this family when you used inquiry? How did inquiry extend the conversation?

#### What Next?

Practice your inquiry skills with a colleague. Ask for feedback on how your use of inquiry contributes to the conversation.